



# Conflicts in the Middle East

## MAIN IDEA

### POWER AND AUTHORITY

Division of Palestine after World War II made the Middle East a hotbed of competing nationalist movements.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The conflict in the Middle East threatens the stability of the world today.

## TERMS & NAMES

- Anwar Sadat
- Golda Meir
- PLO
- Yasir Arafat
- Camp David Accords
- intifada
- Oslo Peace Accords

**SETTING THE STAGE** In the years following World War II, the Jewish people won what for so long had eluded them: their own state. The gaining of their homeland along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, however, came at a heavy price. A Jewish state was unwelcome in this mostly Arab region, and the resulting hostility led to a series of wars. Perhaps no Arab people, however, have been more opposed to a Jewish state than the Palestinians, who claim that much of the Jewish land belongs to them. These two groups have waged a bloody battle that goes on today.

## Israel Becomes a State

The land called Palestine now consists of Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. To Jews, their claim to the land dates back 3,000 years, when Jewish kings ruled the region from Jerusalem. To Palestinians (both Muslim and Christian), the land has belonged to them since the Jews were driven out around A.D. 135. To Arabs, the land has belonged to them since their conquest of the area in the 7th century.

After being forced out of Palestine during the second century, the Jewish people were not able to establish their own state and lived in different countries throughout the world. The global dispersal of the Jews is known as the Diaspora. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a group of Jews began returning to the region their ancestors had fled so long ago. They were known as Zionists, people who favored a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. At this time, Palestine was still part of the Ottoman Empire, ruled by Islamic Turks. After the defeat of the Ottomans in World War I, the League of Nations asked Britain to oversee Palestine until it was ready for independence.

By this time, the Jews had become a growing presence in Palestine, and were already pressing for their own nation in the territory. The Palestinians living in the region strongly opposed such a move. In a 1917 letter to Zionist leaders, British Foreign Secretary Sir Arthur Balfour promoted the idea of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine while protecting the “rights of existing non-Jewish communities.” Despite the Balfour Declaration, however, efforts to create a Jewish state failed—and hostility between Palestinians and Jews continued to grow.

## TAKING NOTES

**Following Chronological Order** Use a graphic to fill in some important political and military events that occurred following the Suez Crisis.

Suez Crisis

At the end of World War II, the United Nations took up the matter. In 1947, the UN General Assembly voted for a partition of Palestine into a Palestinian state and a Jewish state. Jerusalem was to be an international city owned by neither side. The terms of the partition gave Jews 55 percent of the area even though they made up only 34 percent of the population. In the wake of the war and the Holocaust, the United States and many European nations felt great sympathy for the Jews.

All of the Islamic countries voted against partition, and the Palestinians rejected it outright. They argued that the UN did not have the right to partition a country without considering the wishes of the majority of its people. Finally, the date was set for the formation of Israel, May 14, 1948. On that date, David Ben Gurion, long-time leader of the Jews residing in Palestine, announced the creation of an independent Israel. **A**

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Summarizing

**A** What recommendations did the UN make for Palestine?

## Israel and Arab States in Conflict

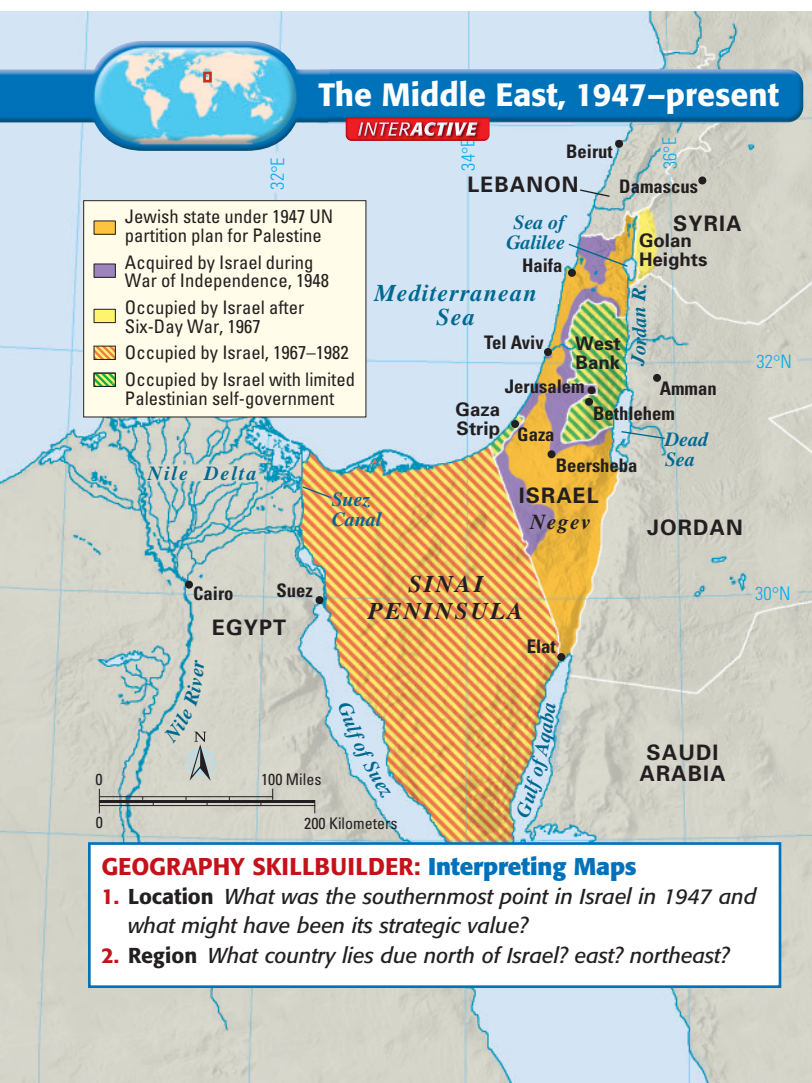
The new nation of Israel got a hostile greeting from its neighbors. The day after it proclaimed itself a state, six Islamic states—Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria—invaded Israel. The first of many Arab-Israeli wars, this one ended within months in a victory for Israel. Full-scale war broke out again in 1956, 1967, and 1973.

Largely as a result of this fighting, the state that the UN had set aside for Palestinians never came into being. Israel seized half the land in the 1948–1949 fighting. While the fighting raged, at least 600,000 Palestinians fled, migrating from the areas under Israeli control. They settled in UN-sponsored refugee camps that ringed the borders of their former homeland. Meanwhile, various Arab nations

seized other Palestinian lands. Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip, while Jordan annexed the West Bank of the Jordan River. (See the map at left.)

**The 1956 Suez Crisis** The second Arab-Israeli war followed in 1956. That year, Egypt seized control of the Suez Canal, which ran along Egypt's eastern border between the Gulf of Suez and the Mediterranean Sea. Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser sent in troops to take the canal, which was controlled by British interests. The military action was prompted in large part by Nasser's anger over the loss of U.S. and British financial support for the building of Egypt's Aswan Dam.

Outraged, the British made an agreement with France and Israel to retake the canal. With air support provided by their European allies, the Israelis marched on the Suez Canal and quickly defeated the Egyptians. However, pressure from



#### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Location** What was the southernmost point in Israel in 1947 and what might have been its strategic value?
- Region** What country lies due north of Israel? east? northeast?



the world community, including the United States and the Soviet Union, forced Israel and the Europeans to withdraw from Egypt. This left Egypt in charge of the canal and thus ended the Suez Crisis.

**Arab-Israeli Wars Continue** Tensions between Israel and the Arab states began to build again in the years following the resolution of the Suez Crisis. By early 1967, Nasser and his Arab allies, equipped with Soviet tanks and aircraft, felt ready to confront Israel. “We are eager for battle in order to force the enemy to awake from his dreams,” Nasser announced, “and meet Arab reality face to face.” He moved to close off the Gulf of Aqaba, Israel’s outlet to the Red Sea.

Convinced that the Arabs were about to attack, the Israelis struck airfields in Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Syria. Safe from air attack, Israeli ground forces struck like lightning on three fronts. Israel defeated the Arab states in what became known as the Six-Day War, because it was over in six days. Israel lost 800 troops in the fighting, while Arab losses exceeded 15,000.

As a consequence of the Six-Day War, Israel gained control of the old city of Jerusalem, the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank. Israelis saw these new holdings along their southern, eastern, and western borders as a key buffer zone against further Arab attacks. Palestinians who lived in Jerusalem were given the choice of Israeli or Jordanian citizenship. Most chose the latter. Palestinians who lived in the other areas were not offered Israeli citizenship and simply came under Jewish control.

A fourth Arab-Israeli conflict erupted in October 1973. Nasser’s successor, Egyptian president **Anwar Sadat** (AHN•wahr suh•DAT), planned a joint Arab attack on the date of Yom Kippur, the holiest of Jewish holidays. This time the Israelis were caught by surprise. Arab forces inflicted heavy casualties and recaptured some of the territory lost in 1967. The Israelis, under their prime minister, **Golda Meir** (MY•uhr), launched a counterattack and regained most of the lost territory. Both sides agreed to a truce after several weeks of fighting, and the Yom Kippur war came to an end. **B**

**The Palestine Liberation Organization** As Israel and its Arab neighbors battled each other, the Palestinians struggled for recognition. While the United Nations had granted the Palestinians their own homeland, the Israelis had seized much of that land, including the West Bank and Gaza Strip, during its various wars. Israel insisted that such a move was vital to its national security.

In 1964, Palestinian officials formed the Palestine Liberation Organization (**PLO**) to push for the formation of a Palestinian state. Originally, the PLO was an umbrella organization made up of different groups—laborers, teachers, lawyers, and guerrilla fighters. Soon, guerrilla groups came to dominate the organization and insisted that the only way to achieve their goal was through armed struggle. In 1969 **Yasir Arafat** (YAH•sur AR•uh•FAT) became chairman of the PLO. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the group carried out numerous attacks against Israel. Some of Israel’s Arab neighbors supported the organization’s goals by allowing the PLO to operate from their lands.

## History Makers



**Golda Meir**  
1898–1978

Meir was born in Kiev, Russia, but grew up in the American Heartland. Although a skilled carpenter, Meir’s father could not find enough work in Kiev. So he sold his tools and other belongings and moved his family to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Meir would spend more than a decade in the United States before moving to Palestine.

The future Israeli prime minister exhibited strong leadership qualities early on. When she learned that many of her fellow fourth grade classmates could not afford textbooks, she created the American Young Sisters Society, an organization that succeeded in raising the necessary funds.

### MAIN IDEA

#### Recognizing Effects

**B** What were some of the effects of the Arab-Israeli conflicts?

## > Analyzing Primary Sources

### The Palestinian View

Writer Fawaz Turki articulates the view held by many of his fellow Palestinians—that the Israelis are illegal occupiers of Palestinian land.

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

These people have walked off with our home and homeland, with our movable and immovable property, with our land, our farms, our shops, our public buildings, our paved roads, our cars, our theaters, our clubs, our parks, our furniture, our tricycles. They hounded us out of ancestral patrimony [land] and shoved us in refugee camps. . . . Now they were astride the whole of historic Palestine and then some, jubilant at the new role as latter day colonial overlords.

**FAWAZ TURKI**, quoted in *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*

### The Israeli View

Many Israelis, including former Israeli General Abraham Tamir, feel that controlling Palestinian lands is vital to their security.

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

Since the establishment of the State of Israel, its national security policy has been designed to defend its existence, integrity and security, and not for expansionist territorial aspirations. Hence, if Arab confrontation states did not initiate wars against Israel or pose threats to its existence, then Israel would not start a war . . . to extend its territories . . . Our national security policy created from its very beginning the linkage between Israel's political willingness for peace and Israel's military capability to repel aggression of any kind and scale.

**ABRAHAM TAMIR**, quoted in *From War to Peace*

#### DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

1. **Analyzing Issues** Why does Fawaz Turki refer to the Israelis as colonizers?
2. **Drawing Conclusions** What might be the best way for the Palestinians to regain control of their land, according to Abraham Tamir?

## Efforts at Peace

In November 1977, just four years after the Yom Kippur war, Anwar Sadat stunned the world by extending a hand to Israel. No Arab country up to this point had recognized Israel's right to exist. In a dramatic gesture, Sadat went before the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, and invited his one-time enemies to join him in a quest for peace.



#### PRIMARY SOURCE

Today, through my visit to you, I ask you why don't we stretch our hands with faith and sincerity and so that together we might . . . remove all suspicion of fear, betrayal, and bad intention? Why don't we stand together with the courage of men and the boldness of heroes who dedicate themselves to a sublime [supreme] aim? Why don't we stand together with the same courage and daring to erect a huge edifice [building] of peace? An edifice that . . . serves as a beacon for generations to come with the human message for construction, development, and the dignity of man.

**ANWAR SADAT**, Knesset speech, November 20, 1977

Sadat emphasized that in exchange for peace Israel would have to recognize the rights of Palestinians. Furthermore, it would have to withdraw from territory seized in 1967 from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.

U.S. president Jimmy Carter recognized that Sadat had created a historic opportunity for peace. In 1978, Carter invited Sadat and Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin (mehn•AHK•hehm BAY•gihn) to Camp David, the presidential retreat in rural Maryland. Isolated from the press and from domestic political pressures, Sadat and Begin worked to reach an agreement. After 13 days of negotiations, Carter triumphantly announced that Egypt recognized Israel as a legitimate state. In exchange, Israel agreed to return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. Signed in 1979, the **Camp David Accords** ended 30 years of hostilities between Egypt and Israel and became the first signed agreement between Israel and an Arab country.



## MAIN IDEA

### Clarifying

**C** What was the significance of the Camp David Accords?

While world leaders praised Sadat, his peace initiative enraged many Arab countries. In 1981, a group of Muslim extremists assassinated him. However, Egypt's new leader, Hosni Mubarak (HAHS•nee moo•BAHR•uhk), has worked to maintain peace with Israel. **C**

**Israeli-Palestinian Tensions Increase** One Arab group that continued to clash with the Israelis was the Palestinians, a large number of whom lived in the West Bank and Gaza Strip—lands occupied by Israel. During the 1970s and 1980s, the military wing of the PLO intensified its armed struggle against Israel. Israel responded forcefully, bombing suspected rebel bases in Palestinian towns. In 1982, the Israeli army went as far as invading the neighboring country of Lebanon in an attempt to destroy Palestinian strongholds. The Israelis soon became involved in Lebanon's civil war and were forced to withdraw.

In 1987, Palestinians began to express their frustrations in a widespread campaign of civil disobedience called the **intifada**, or “uprising.” The intifada took the form of boycotts, demonstrations, attacks on Israeli soldiers, and rock throwing by unarmed teenagers. The intifada continued into the 1990s, with little progress made toward a solution. However, the civil disobedience affected world opinion, which, in turn, put pressure on Israel to seek negotiations with the Palestinians. Finally, in October 1991, Israeli and Palestinian delegates met for a series of peace talks.

**The Oslo Peace Accords** Negotiations between the two sides made little progress, as the status of the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel proved to be a bitterly divisive issue. In 1993, however, secret talks held in Oslo, Norway, produced a surprise agreement: a document called the Declaration of Principles, also known as the **Oslo Peace Accords**. Israel, under the leadership of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (YIHITS•hahk rah•BEEN), agreed to grant the Palestinians self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, beginning with the town of Jericho. Rabin and Arafat signed the agreement on September 13, 1993.

The difficulty of making the agreement work was demonstrated by the assassination of Rabin in 1995. He was killed by a right-wing Jewish extremist who opposed concessions to the Palestinians. Rabin was succeeded as prime minister by Benjamin Netanyahu (neh•tan•YAH•hoo), who had opposed the Oslo Accords. Still, Netanyahu made efforts to keep to the agreement. In January 1997, Netanyahu met with Arafat to work out plans for a partial Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

## The Israeli–Palestinian Struggle

**1947** UN votes to partition Palestine into Jewish and Palestinian states.

**1949** Israel repels attack by Arab states and takes more land than originally assigned.

**1967** Israel wins Six-Day War and seizes more Palestinian land for what it calls security purposes.

**1987** Palestinians intensify their resistance with start of intifada movement (see below).

**1993** Israel agrees to withdraw from several Palestinian regions in historic Oslo Peace Accords.



**2000** Visit by Israeli leader Ariel Sharon to holy Arab site launches second intifada and years of violence.

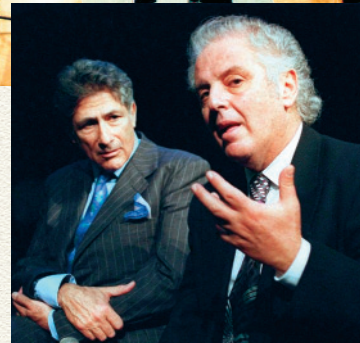


### Signs of Hope

Amid the cycle of violence and disagreement in the Middle East, there are small but inspiring efforts to bring together Israelis and Palestinians. One is Seeds of Peace, a summer camp that hosts teenagers from opposing sides of world conflicts in the hopes of creating lasting friendships. Another is the West-Eastern Divan, an orchestra made up of Jewish and Arab musicians—the creation of famous Jewish conductor Daniel Barenboim and prominent Palestinian writer Edward Said.



▲ Palestinian and Israeli campers bond at Seeds of Peace, located in Maine.



▲ Edward Said (left) and Daniel Barenboim talk about their orchestra, shown above.

### Peace Slips Away

In 1999, the slow and difficult peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians seemed to get a boost. Ehud Barak won election as Israeli prime minister. Many observers viewed him as a much stronger supporter of the peace plan than Netanyahu had been. The world community, led by the United States, was determined to take advantage of such a development.

In July of 2000, U.S. president Bill Clinton hosted a 15-day summit meeting at Camp David between Ehud Barak and Yasir Arafat. The two men, however, could not reach a compromise, and the peace plan once again stalled. Just two months later an Israeli political leader, Ariel Sharon, visited a Jewish holy place, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Temple Mount is also the location of one of the most holy places for Muslims, The Dome of the Rock. Sharon's visit to the vicinity of such a revered Muslim site outraged Palestinians. Riots broke out and a second intifada was launched.

**The Conflict Intensifies** The second intifada began much like the first with demonstrations, attacks on Israeli soldiers, and rock throwing by unarmed teenagers. But this time the Palestinian militant groups began using a new weapon—suicide bombers. Their attacks on Jewish settlements in occupied territories and on civilian locations throughout Israel significantly raised the level of bloodshed. In the first 17 months of the uprising, one Israeli died for every three Palestinians, a rate much higher than during the first intifada.



In response to the uprising, Israeli forces moved into Palestinian refugee camps and clamped down on militants. Troops destroyed buildings in which they suspected extremists were hiding and bulldozed entire areas of Palestinian towns and camps. The Israeli army even bombed Arafat's headquarters, trapping him inside his compound for many days.

In recent years, peace between these two bitter enemies has seemed farther away than ever. In 2001, Ariel Sharon was elected Israeli prime minister. A former military leader, Sharon refused to negotiate with the Palestinians until attacks on Israelis stopped. Meanwhile, relations between Yasir Arafat and Israeli leaders grew so strained that Israeli officials declared they no longer would meet with the long-time leader of the PLO.

**Working Toward a Solution** Despite all this, peace efforts continue. Under intense pressure from the world community, Arafat agreed to take a less prominent role in peace talks with Israel. In early 2003, Palestinian leaders appointed their first-ever prime minister, high-ranking PLO official, Mahmoud Abbas. In his new position, Abbas became the main negotiator for the Palestinian side. Shortly afterward, U.S. president George W. Bush brought together Sharon and Abbas to begin working on a new peace plan known as the “road map.”

The two men appeared committed to reaching an agreement. Abbas declared, “Our goal is two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.” Meanwhile, Sharon expressed his desire to see Palestinians “govern themselves in their own state.” To be sure, many divisive issues remain between the two groups. With leaders from both sides willing to work together, however, hope remains that harmony will one day come to this region.



▲ A U.S. magazine cover highlights America's involvement in the Middle East crisis.

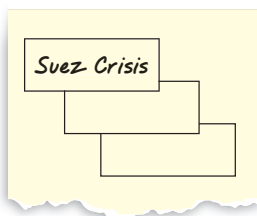
## SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Anwar Sadat    • Golda Meir    • PLO    • Yasir Arafat    • Camp David Accords    • intifada    • Oslo Peace Accords

### USING NOTES

2. Which event was most important? Why?



### MAIN IDEAS

3. What historic claim do both Palestinians and Jews make to the land of Palestine?
4. What land did Israel gain from the wars against its Arab neighbors?
5. What were the terms of the Oslo Accords?

### CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **COMPARING** How was the creation of Israel similar to the establishment of an independent India?
7. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** Why do you think all the Israeli-Palestinian accords ultimately have failed?
8. **ANALYZING ISSUES** Some have said that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict represents the struggle of right against right. Explain why you agree or disagree.
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **POWER AND AUTHORITY** In groups of three or four, create a list of ten **interview questions** for Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, Yasir Arafat, Yitzhak Rabin, or a current leader of either Israel or Palestine.

### CONNECT TO TODAY

#### DRAWING A POLITICAL CARTOON

Draw a **political cartoon** or other type of image that conveys your thoughts about the stalled peace effort today between Palestinians and Israelis.